

positive effect here. You are always happy, in spite of the pressure placed on you from people in the well: How should I vote? How much longer? Trying to get people here to go late—how much longer is it going to be? So thank you very much. You have been great, and I look forward to visiting with you and, hopefully, you and Dodd will let me watch one of those movies some time, because Chris Dodd is the leader of the Motion Picture Association of America.

THANKING THE PAGES

Mr. President, another short thing I wish to say. Over the years I have come to admire so very much our pages. They sacrifice to come here. It is not easy for them to come here and go to school for a semester, but they do. This school they go to is no soft school. It is hard. They start school at 6 a.m.—I think it is 6 o'clock—and they go for a couple of hours. I know they are supposed to get up around 5. It is such a good environment. We have gone out of our way to have a pleasant place for them to live, the so-called dorm. They have monitors who watch them so very closely. Their parents don't have to worry about them. It is a good experience. They see what happens on a daily basis in the bowels of government, the Senate, and they all go different ways. They are all juniors in high school. They will go back to their high school and then go on to college, but in their entire life they will never forget their experience here.

I went just for a few days when I was a junior in high school—maybe I was a senior; it was right after my junior year—to Boys State, and I made friends during the five days we spent there, and they are my friends even today, after all those many years ago, and that is the relationship these pages have developed.

So I say to them, thank you very much for the work you do.

I was walking out, as I do, this back door the last night or two, and I see one of the pages. They have a door open, and I see this list of stuff on the wall. So I say: What is that? What they have to know, among other things—each of us can be pretty—what is the right word—demanding, although I don't know if that is the right word. Senator McCONNELL and I have these podiums here all the time, but we are the only two. So when a Senator comes to speak, they need a podium. But they have to get the right podium and the pages have to know, when a Senator wants to speak, what podium to get. Is it going to be a low one, middle-sized, half middle-sized, or a big one? Anyway, they have to know that. They have a big chart up there to make sure they don't make mistakes.

They make sure we have water. I don't like warm water. I don't like cold water. I don't like ice. The pages have learned we all have our demands for water—sparkling, half sparkling, half regular, half tap. Anyway, I am so grateful they took the time to leave

their homes to come here to go to school, to be students in the Senate.

FLOOD INSURANCE

Mr. President, finally, we are going to have a vote when we come back on flood insurance. Senators MENENDEZ, LANDRIEU, and ISAKSON have worked on this for a long time. Senator LANDRIEU has been—what is the right word—persistent, and that is an understatement. She has been on this as she can get on something and never get off of it. We have come, over the last several months, within just inches, we thought, of being able to have an agreement and move it to the floor. But she and Senator ISAKSON have worked hard to get a unanimous consent request to bring it to the floor, and they are always just a little bit short. So I am filing cloture in just a few minutes on a motion to proceed on this matter, and that will be the vote when we get back. If they are able to work out an agreement, then we can always modify having that vote and move forward. As I understand it, there are five or ten amendments they want to have to that bill, and we have all agreed that is OK. So I hope we can do that when we come back, and I thank those Senators for their good work.

Mr. President, could I ask what the pending business is before the Senate.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The pending business is the motion to proceed to S. 1926.

CLOTURE MOTION

Mr. REID. I have a cloture motion at the desk relative to that measure.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The cloture motion having been presented under rule XXII, the Chair directs the clerk to read the motion.

The assistant legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, hereby move to bring to a close debate on the motion to proceed to calendar No. 294, S. 1926, a bill to delay the implementation of certain provisions of the Biggert-Waters Flood Insurance Reform Act of 2012, and for other purposes.

Harry Reid, Robert Menendez, Mary L. Landrieu, Sherrod Brown, Richard Blumenthal, Joe Manchin III, Tom Udall, Patrick J. Leahy, Bill Nelson, Christopher A. Coons, Christopher Murphy, Mark R. Warner, Kay R. Hagan, Amy Klobuchar, Tim Kaine, Thomas R. Carper, Dianne Feinstein.

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the mandatory quorum required under Rule XXII also be waived; and the vote on the motion to invoke cloture occur at 5:30 p.m. on January 27.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

MORNING BUSINESS

Mr. REID. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to a period of morning business, with Senators allowed to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

TRIBUTE TO PATRICK KILCUR

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, I would like to say a fond farewell to Patrick Kilcur, a Republican floor assistant who has decided to move on after 7 very eventful years here in the Senate. Patrick has been a real asset to the conference but also just a great guy to have around. And that is something that has been true for everybody from the pages to the Senators. Anytime morale stated to flag in the late hours around here, Patrick was usually the one who gave everybody a lift. He has got a great spirit and a great sense of humor, qualities that we are always in great need of on the floor, especially late at night or during the various crises we have had to deal with over the past several years. And he has just been a very thoughtful member of the team. On a trip to China a few years back, Patrick returned not just with some new custom shirts but with a panda hat for all the Senate pages. He has always been quick to offer guidance to the pages and to thank them. And he always made time when the end of their terms arrived to take them out to lunch and send them off the right way. Patrick is a proud native of West Chester, PA. He first came here as a floor monitor for Senator Specter in 2006 and moved to the cloakroom 2 years later. He became floor assistant in 2012. We will miss his ready smile and his knowledge of the floor. I know the pages will miss him too. On a happy note, we are glad that Patrick found his future wife Julie here in the Senate. Patrick and Julie just got engaged last month, and we wish them all the very best in their future life together. So to Patrick, I say thank you on behalf of the entire Senate. Best wishes in all your future endeavors.

ELECTIONS IN BELARUS

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, 3 years ago, the country of Belarus held a presidential election that marked—instead of finally joining the rest of democratic Europe—a brutal crackdown on freedom of expression and basic democratic principles. There was a glimmer of hope that perhaps this would finally be an opportunity for the Belarusian people to freely choose their own president in an honest and open election. No longer would the Belarusian people have to endure under the “Last Dictator of Europe,” strongman Alexander Lukashenko.

Tragically, those hopes were quickly dashed when Lukashenko simply claimed another term as president amid elections described by international monitors as seriously flawed.

On election night, December 19, 2010, hundreds of Belarusian citizens were beaten and arrested by KGB henchman—that is right, Belarus still has a KGB security service—for having the

nerve to run in the election or peaceably demonstrate for an honest accounting of the election results. It was the worst crackdown in decades—although certainly not the first under Lukashenko's iron fist in which he uses a combination of repression, intimidation, and torture to cling to power.

I have come to the Senate floor a number of times during the past 3 years to talk about the tragic events in Belarus, where the Lukashenko regime has imprisoned and mistreated numerous political and human rights activists. Let me add with great irony and sadness—that Russia is presently trying to strongarm our friends in Ukraine to join a Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan trade bloc instead of letting it sign an association agreement with the European Union. Sign up with the last dictatorship of Europe or the European Union—not much of a choice if you ask me.

I have been glad to see that with a push from the international community, some of Belarus's political prisoners have been released, including most of the 2010 presidential candidates who had the temerity to run for office.

Some of you may have seen an op-ed in the Washington Post last month, written by one such presidential candidate from the 2010 election in Belarus, Andrei Sannikov. Mr. Sannikov was sentenced to 5 years in jail for having the nerve to run against Lukashenko. At his trial, Sannikov said prison guards threatened to harm his wife and small son in an effort to secure a confession. Lukashenko's henchmen even threatened to take custody of his son, who was then 3 years old. Yet, he has not stopped working for a democratic Belarus. In his December 27 op-ed, he argues,

... it is important to remember that Ukraine's northern neighbor Belarus, [is] a country that lies geographically in the heart of Europe but politically is more akin to a Soviet backwater. The majority of its citizens want to be free, but they are repressed by a brutal dictator. It is not a question of if but when Belarusians will rid themselves of Europe's last dictatorship and join the community of European democracies.

He reminds us that there is still work to be done.

Take for example, president candidate Mikalai Statkevich. Statkevich, who was sentenced to six years in a medium-security prison following the 2010 election, remains in jail. He can barely receive medical assistance or meet with his family or lawyers. He is constantly harassed and pushed to sign bogus confessions for crimes he never committed.

Or for example, Ales Byalyatski, a prominent human rights activist still in jail. He is Vice-Chairman of the International Federation for Human Rights and President of the Human Rights Center Viasna, an organization that offers financial and legal assistance to political prisoners and their families. I don't think Ales or his wife, Natalia, who has visited with my of-

fice, ever thought their family would be among the ones they typically helped.

Moreover, the Lukashenko government targeted not only various political and human rights activists after the December 2010 election and protests, but it did so even before anything had happened, arresting for example, Eduard Lobau who had been a member of the youth democracy movement. Lobau was arrested and assaulted for peaceably protesting in the days leading up to the election.

Considering what they have fought for and what they have been through, it is no wonder that Statkevich, Belyatsky, and Lobau had been short-listed for the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament, as well as receiving a wide variety of international attention. While the Sakharov prize ultimately went to Malala Yousafzai, a worthy recipient, we cannot forget these three men and the others who rot in Belarusian KGB jails on dubious and trumped up charges. Their families, too, are continuously denied basic legal rights.

In 2012, I joined with my colleagues in the Senate to introduce Senate Resolution 105, which passed unanimously, condemning the sham elections and calling on the Belarusian regime to release all political prisoners. The resolution also called for new elections in Belarus that meet international standards, supported the tightening of sanctions against the Belarusian state oil and petrochemical company, and urged the International Ice Hockey Federation to suspend the 2014 Ice Hockey Championship in Minsk until all Belarusian political prisoners are released.

Sadly, our calls have gone unheeded by the International Ice Hockey Federation, which still plans to hold its 2014 championship in Minsk while political prisoners languish in KGB prisons. I simply cannot understand how the International Ice Hockey Federation can give hockey-loving strongman Lukashenko such a propaganda hook amid his country's human rights travesty.

I visited Belarus just weeks following the sham elections. I met with the family members of many of these jailed activists. The stories of missing or harassed loved ones, including children, were heartbreaking.

But the perseverance we have seen from civil society groups and human rights defenders in Belarus has been deeply inspiring. Despite intimidation and threat, these activists continue to fight for their freedoms. They did so through parliamentary elections during September 2012, also decried by international observers, and they do so through the many anniversaries of the election and ensuing protests. And they persevered most recently, when Lukashenko signed a law that requires future parliamentary elections to be held in single rounds and bans any calls to boycott elections.

I can only hope their efforts come to fruition in 2015 when Belarus is slated to host its next presidential election.

Until then, I will continue to stand in the Senate to call on Lukashenko to release the remaining political prisoners and stand with the people of Belarus in their quest for democracy and justice.

RECOGNIZING GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I am not anyone would call a "blue blood"—at least not in the conventional sense of that term. My ancestors did not come over on the Mayflower. My mom was an immigrant; she came to this country from Lithuania when she was 2 years old. But I do have some blue blood in my veins—Hoya blue—for Georgetown University.

With help of affordable loans from the United States Government, this immigrant's son from East St. Louis, IL was able to earn two degrees from Georgetown University—an undergraduate degree from the Walsh School of Foreign Service and a law degree from the Georgetown Law Center.

In addition, it was a college internship while I was a Georgetown undergraduate 50 years ago that first brought me to the United States Senate. I had the amazing good luck to land an internship with Senator Paul Douglas of Illinois—one of the great ones. He had a brilliant mind and enormous moral and political courage. Had I not gone to Georgetown, it is likely that I never would have met Paul Douglas and I would not be here today. Had I not gone to Georgetown, I never would have met some of my greatest teachers.

I owe Georgetown a great deal, so I would like to take a moment to say thank you as this great university prepares to celebrate an historic milestone. Next week—on January 23—Georgetown University will celebrate its 225th anniversary.

January 23, 1789. That was 6 weeks before the United States Constitution took effect and 6 weeks before the first United States Congress was seated.

Georgetown was founded by John Carroll, America's first Catholic bishop. It was America's first Catholic and first Jesuit college. In his proposal for the new university, Father John Carroll wrote that in keeping with "the liberal Principle of our Constitution, the [school] will be open to Students of Every Religious Profession."

That steadfast commitment to religious liberty remains a hallmark of Georgetown University. Today, only about 40 percent of Georgetown students identify as Roman Catholic. The other 60 percent are Protestants, Jews, Muslims, Bahá'í, Buddhist, Hindu, Mormon and members of other faith traditions.